

said before, we celebrate our diversity as the sharing of our cultures, traditions, and languages; it is what makes us so special in Hawaii. Our diversity unifies us.

Colleagues, I want you to know that during the period of the Kingdom, many people traveled through and to Hawaii. In 1832, records indicate that there were 400 foreigners in Hawaii. Starting in 1852, sugar plantations began to recruit foreign workers to Hawaii. They included Chinese, Portuguese, Japanese, and Filipino workers. While many of these workers were temporary and returned to their homelands, a number of them stayed in Hawaii and have embraced the culture and traditions of Hawaii's indigenous peoples.

The opponents of this legislation first tried to represent this issue as a native vs. non-native issue. They failed to understand how we celebrate diversity in my home State and how so many embrace all things Hawaiian whether or not they can trace their lineage back to the aboriginal, indigenous peoples of Hawaii. The opponents also fail to understand the tremendous respect the people of Hawaii have for Native Hawaiian culture and the fact that the average person is not threatened by the idea of Native Hawaiians having recognition. The people of Hawaii understand that the preservation of rights for Native Hawaiians does not happen to their detriment.

The opponents of this legislation have tried to spread misinformation about the bill to lead non-Hawaiians to believe that their rights will be taken away if the bill is passed. This is not true. In the days to come I will elaborate more. Today, however, I wanted to share Hawaii's history and to explain the celebration of diversity and of multiculturalism in my home state. I am proud of my constituents—proud of their many cultures and traditions—and the fact that they are secure enough in their heritage to be able to support parity in federal policies for Native Hawaiians.

I ask my colleagues to join me in helping to do what is right, what is just for Native Hawaiians.

I look forward to the support that I will receive from my colleagues.

Thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to tell you about my history.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### TAX INCREASE PREVENTION ACT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, we have had a very good week in the Senate. We had an opportunity to pass the

Tax Increase Prevention Act an hour or so ago, which is going to make an important difference not only in the lives of a great number of individual Americans, but also it will be very critical in continuing this robust economy that America currently enjoys.

I commend Members of the Senate for stepping to the plate and passing this very important measure, and particular congratulations go to Chairman CHUCK GRASSLEY of the Finance Committee for his tenacious pursuit of this very important piece of legislation.

#### REAUTHORIZATION OF THE SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY SELF-DETERMINATION ACT OF 2000

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to engage in a colloquy with the majority leader, the Senator from Tennessee, regarding the reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000. This program is critical to bridge the gap in my State and others between what was, what is, and what will be the management direction of Federal forests. For nearly 100 years, counties across the country have shared in the productivity of Federal lands. They have received 25 percent of revenues derived from commercial activity on Forest Service lands, and under a separate statute—50 percent of BLM revenues derived from the O & C lands of western Oregon. In areas that are dominated by Federal forests, these revenues also dominate county government budgets—budgets that pay for public schools, road maintenance and public safety.

This issue is not one of permanently replacing forest productivity with a Government check. While I am a lead proponent of the safety net, which was not intended to be permanent, I have also tried very hard to restore common sense, predictability and productivity to the management of Federal forests. These lands are both ecological and economic assets that must be treated better.

Unfortunately, that day has not yet arrived. That is why we created a safety net in 2000. That is why we also passed the Healthy Forests Restoration Act. That is why we must consider dealing with postcatastrophic event legislation, why we must continue funding the Forest Service and BLM forest management programs and do the other things that are needed to create real jobs in the woods and return viability to rural communities.

Again, the day when forests are ecologically and economically sustainable has not yet arrived. What has arrived is an impending disaster if the county payments safety net is not extended. Oregon counties are not alone facing the hard times. Places such as Clearwater County, ID; Chelan County, WA; and Siskiyou County, CA, will also be devastated by failure to make a short-term extension of the Secure Rural Schools Act.

A commitment from the majority leader to work with me to identify offsets for an extension of the Secure Rural Schools Act will embolden our efforts and reassure rural counties in my State that this issue is of the utmost importance to the Senate.

Mr. FRIST. I thank the Senator from Oregon for his dedication to his State and all States that have been affected by the downturn in Federal timber receipts. He has been in close contact with me, the assistant majority leader and the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee communicating the significance and urgency of his cause. I commit to him to address the needs of rural counties and schools in Oregon and elsewhere. Working with the committees of jurisdiction, I commit to a thorough search for funding offsets so that these critical rural education programs can continue to serve the youth of those communities.

Mr. GRASSLEY. I am aware of Senator SMITH's concerns and pledge to work with him within the Finance Committee's jurisdiction, especially in the area of tax-exempt financing, to find the resources to assist the hard-hit areas to which he refers.

Mr. SMITH. I appreciate the commitment of the Senator from Tennessee to help identify the needed offsets to extend the Secure Rural Schools program and look forward to working with him closely in the coming weeks. I also thank the chairman of the Finance Committee for his consideration of this issue.

#### MEDICAL CARE ACCESS PROTECTION ACT OF 2006 AND HEALTHY MOTHERS AND HEALTHY BABIES ACCESS TO CARE ACT

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I regret that, twice this week, the Senate has failed to address the problem of medical liability costs. I support S. 22, the Medical Care Access Protection Act of 2006, and S. 23, the Healthy Mothers and Healthy Babies Access to Care Act. Both of these bills would address the very real problem of access to medical care for people in my State and across the country. We have a crisis in the United States, and in particular in Arizona, when it comes to the availability of providers.

The terrible distortions in our medical liability system have been with us for years. In Arizona, we have seen emergency rooms that cannot remain open because there are not enough trauma surgeons and specialists to staff the ER, physicians who have decided to move from my State to States with more supportive medical liability law, and finally, doctors who have opted to retire early. It is troubling to have highly trained, dedicated, qualified members of the medical community leave or to give up their profession—all to the detriment of their patients.

This shrinking availability of physicians is due in part to the high insurance premiums that doctors are facing.